

Journey Down Surplus Street : PART IX

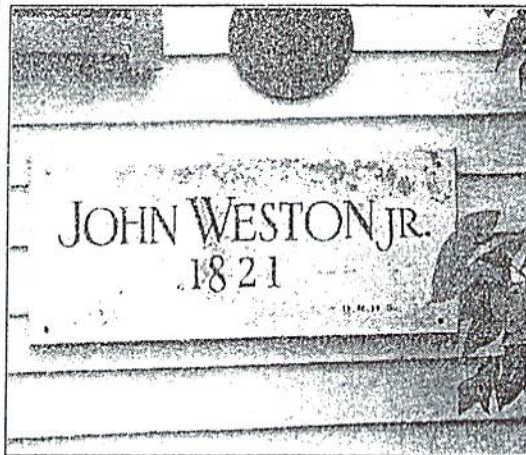
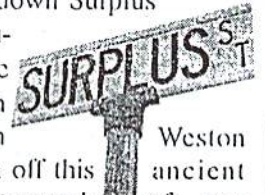


Photo by Gabby Katz

The Other Westons

By DEBORA BABIN KATZ

As we make our way down Surplus Street, we come to two beautiful Capes. One faces the road, The John Weston House, while the John Jr. House sits further back off this ancient cart way. It is impossible to speak of one house history without discussion of the other parcel and homestead - their stories are so entwined, beginning with a land grant received in 1696. This



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Weston family's livelihoods, like their relatives on Powder Point, depended on the sea, which brought them both prosperity and tragedy. The John Weston House, the oldest house on our tour, will also take us back to the days of the American Revolution. A pathway can be more than just a road to the shipyard and shore. It can lead to tales of bravery and patriotism, which once told remain as an example of our forefathers' struggles for success and freedom.

The John Weston House 204 Surplus Street

In 1696, John Weston was granted a parcel of land on Surplus Street. At the time, he was living at the Nook on the western side of Captain's Hill where he made his living as a shipwright. There are no records of when and who built this lovely house which originally was a half-Cape. We do

with wife Sarah Standish Weston and a new baby son, Micah. Three generations of Westons now resided in the half Cape.

John Weston had learned his trade in shipbuilding at the Thomas Prince shipyard by Eagles Nest Creek. This shipyard is believed to be town's first shipyard, with Duxbury's shipbuilding enterprises beginning in 1719 when Thomas Prince built his first vessel made of wild cherry wood. After Weston moved to Surplus Street he turned his talents toward another Duxbury industry— weaving.

There were other weavers in the Surplus Street area at the time. "In the Weechertown area, along South Station Street, there were at least two men who were weavers, known to have employed one or more in their shop," noted Wentworth. Weaving, like shoemaking, originated as a home business by the wives of



This old photo taken of the John Weston House shows the openness of the property.
courtesy of Jane and Harry Ekblom

that his wife had given birth to five children, and his step-mother and half-brother were still living in the Cape house.

The property benefited not only from Abner's hard work, but also from the woman he had married— Sarah Standish Weston. As the great-granddaughter of Myles Standish, her family's prosperity proved an asset for Abner and Sarah. Her father provided a substantial dowry of furniture and live stock, and she would later inherit a substantial sum of money, 20 pounds, from her father. "A considerable amount at that time when many bequests were for shillings," said Wentworth.

In April of 1759, Abner's two sons, Seth and Micah, joined Captain John Wadsworth's Company which went to Canada and joined the English forces to fight the French. Fortunately, both sons returned from the war, and soon married— Micah to Bethia Oldham and Seth to Desire Jenny.

Micah, like most Duxbury boys, was lured to the sea and worked as a mariner when he returned from Canada. "Tradition, love of adventure, desire to see the world, and the social prestige of the shipmaster's calling were partly responsible for Yankee boys going to sea," noted Samuel Eliot Morison in his book, *The Maritime History of Massachusetts 1783-1860*. The other advantage to this type of work was high wages. By 1799, one seafaring company, for example, paid boys \$8 to \$10 a month, seamen \$14 to \$17 per month, and petty officers up to \$24 month. Reportedly, by 1812 American seamen

made an average of \$22.50 per month. This was a substantial amount of money considering food and shelter was also provided during the long stays at sea. A common laborer in New England, on the other hand, earned about eighty cents a day in 1810, which had to also pay for housing and food expenses. It appears Micah was able to provide well for his family, and maintain the Weston homestead from his mariner wages.

Good wages came with a price, however, for seafaring young men. "Many of them

coming marriage" to Sarah Sampson, said Wentworth. The transfer is unique in that it gave Micah 2/3s interest in the "whole of his farm" including the house and outbuildings, and James, Abner's grandson, 1/3 interest, which represented land only.

Although away at sea for long stretches, Micah still managed to have seven children with his wife, Bethia, all of whom were raised in this Cape Cod. His eldest son James enlisted in both the army and navy during the later part of the Revolutionary War.

"He served aboard the schooners that ran the British blockade in an effort to have some trade with coast ports and also to keep in touch with the other towns," noted Wentworth.

James Weston, along with three other Duxbury men— Consider Glass, Thomas Chandler, and Asa Tour— served as the crew for Samuel Chandler's schooner, the *Polly Johnson*, under the command of Captain John Winsor. It was captured by



The John Weston House built in 1731 is the oldest house on our Surplus Street tour.

Photo by Shelly Babin

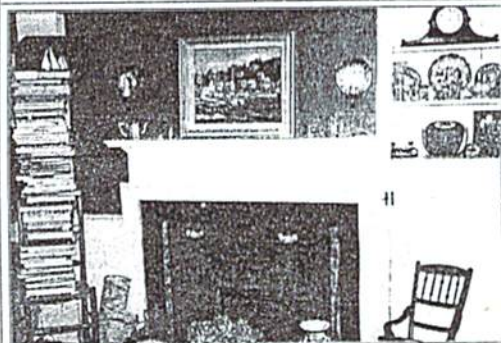
know, however, that John Weston sold his Nook property in 1731 after his first wife Deborah Delano passed away. Around the same time, his eldest son Abner had married Sarah Standish, the great granddaughter of Captain Myles Standish. "It seems certain that John and Abner went from the Nook to the grant (on Surplus) since there is no record of either of them owning any other house in Duxbury, or elsewhere, after leaving the Nook," noted Dorothy Wentworth, the former town historian.

It is believed John Weston built the house at 204 Surplus Street in 1729, in anticipation of his eldest son's wedding to Sarah. Only two years later, however, John also moved into the Cape on Surplus Street, along with his second wife Rebecca and a four-year-old son, David. John Weston was 68 years old when he left the Nook to retire to Surplus Street. His son Abner, married in 1730,

the household. As the industry grew, some weavers built long buildings near their homestead for their looms. John Weston may have worked for one of these shops.

Unfortunately, John did not live long in the Cape house on Surplus Street. He died in his sleep in 1736 with the recorded cause of death being "nightmares," which he is said to have experienced regularly. There was no transfer of title through deed or will from John Weston to his son Abner who was still living in the house with his wife, infant son, step-mother and half brother. It was common practice for a son to take over the operation of the family farm, and thus obtain possession of the property without deed, will or objection from other family members. This was the case for the John Weston House.

In addition to farming his property, Abner was most likely a shipwright. By 1744, he had



This front room of the John Weston House was later added, converting the house from a half-house to a full Cape.
Photo by Deborah Katz

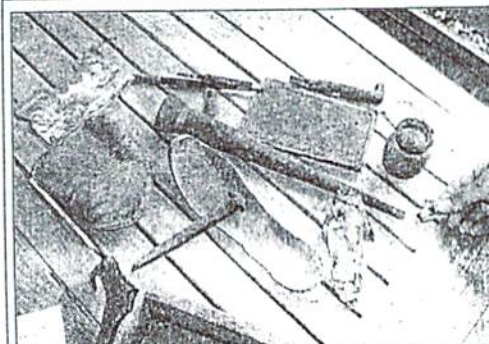
never returned from their dangerous calling," noted Morison. This would be true for two Weston family members. Micah's brother, Seth, who was killed by lightning while at sea, and Micah's son John—lost at sea around 1798.

Micah's mother, Sarah Standish Weston, passed away in 1779. Following her death, Abner deeded his property over "to his son and grandson, in an unusual double transfer that may have been in consideration of James' age, 24, and his forth-

a British ship, the *Perseverance*. The British crew took the schooner out for a cruise to determine its sailing abilities. Fortunately for James Weston and his companions, the enemy returned the next day releasing them back on the *Polly Johnson*.

These Duxbury men were very lucky considering the outcome of an earlier British capture of a Duxbury schooner belonging to Elijah Sampson, which was set on fire off the beach shore. This schooner's crew met a different fate as they were placed on a prison ship in New Jersey where all but two Duxbury men died. For the Weston family, James' capture by the British must have been an exciting bedtime story for his children and grandchildren to listen to around the large keeping room hearth.

By the end of 1785, James had married Sarah Sampson and had his first child, Sally. Tragedy occurred in 1787 when the couple's twins died only a few days after birth. Another loss would follow, as



Items found in the ceiling of the John Weston House during renovations.

The Other Westons

their daughter Sally died at the age of ten, two years after the birth of their son James Jr. The couple then had Otis born in 1797, who grew up with his brother James Jr. and lived a long and fruitful life in the Cape house on Surplus Street.

A bedroom in the northwest corner of the John Weston house reveals a later addition, which expanded the half-Cape into a full Cape Cod. At the time, this expansion provided Abner's spinster daughter, Hannah, her own living quarters. There are two cellars, which also indicate the original house was a half-house later converted. The older section of the house has a dirt root cellar, while the extension of the Cape maintains a cellar with a field-stone wall. "Each was entered by a trap door opening in the floor, the usual way until early in the 1800s," noted Wentworth.

The John Weston house has been beautifully restored and maintained over the many years of ownership. The long wood planks and original doors are treasures from the early 18th century. A door in the original part of the house is from a ship and dates to the 1700s, noted Jane Ekblom, who purchased the house with her husband Harry in 1991.

During renovations of the keeping room's low ceiling, items such as a lady's glove, a tiny teacup, pieces of porcelain, and an inkbottle were discovered. "The former owner's, David and Diantha Patterson, gave us a shoebox filled with the things found in the ceiling and also items they dug up, such as the front section of a man's leather shoe, which are from the shoemaking business which happened here," said Jane Ekblom. (see photo) Otis Weston, the last Weston to own the property, was a shoemaker by trade.

John Weston built his family a sturdy structure as evidenced by the large beams found throughout the original

house. Today, the corner beams are still exposed as a reminder of his workmanship. "When we went to have two scones installed in the dining room, we found horizontal beams that were 5 by 15 inches thick, and the electrician had to take the shingles off the outside of the house just to get them in. A two day project just for two lights," laughed Ekblom.

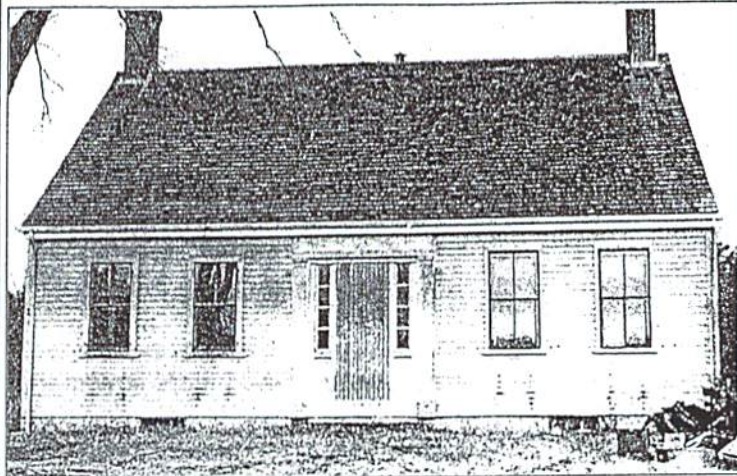
What is most remarkable about the house, however, is the fact that five generations of Westons resided here. Mostly mariners and men of the Revolution War who after making the extension from a half Cape to a full, never felt the need to make any other substantial additions, leaving the property virtually unchanged until it finally went out of the Weston family in 1881.

John Weston, Jr. House 218 Surplus Street

Although this lovely Cape Cod was built around 1821 by John Weston, Jr., its history goes further back to a 1696 land grant, and early deed transactions in the Weston family. In 1794, Micah Weston, son of Abner Weston, sold the family homestead at 204 Surplus Street along with surrounding land to his son John soon after John's marriage to Priscilla Stetson. John had made substantial improvements to the farmhouse prior to his actual ownership. The deed transaction maintained a clause which allowed his father Micah and mother Bethia Weston to remain living in the residence "as long as they live in this world."

A year later, John purchased from his brother James a 10-acre parcel of land abutting the family homestead.

The sea brought both prosperity and tragedy to the Weston family, however. John's plans for the property came to an abrupt end when he was lost at sea in 1798. Except for the ten acres purchased from his brother James, the remaining land and house at 204 Surplus Street reverted back to



The John Weston, Jr. House in the 1940s.

courtesy of Dr. Allen and Joanne Lahey

John's father Micah. The widow Priscilla retained the ten-acre parcel for her infant son to have one day.

A year later, Priscilla married Wait Wadsworth who was also recently widowed and had a sizeable family, including a child the same age as John Weston, Jr. Wait Wadsworth, as we know from Part VI of this series, was a blacksmith who provided well for his family. His trade was growing due to the shipbuilding industry's need for ironworkers. John Weston, Jr. grew up not far from his Weston relatives on Surplus Street. From his stepfather, he learned the blacksmith trade.

It is not until John Jr.'s marriage to Hannah Soule in 1821 that the ten-acre lot comes back into the story. This ten acres would be the place John Jr. would build a large Cape Cod house with a back ell for his new wife Hannah. Their first child, also named Hannah, was born there in 1822.

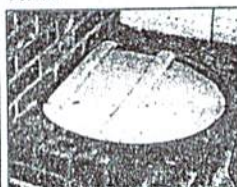
Six more children would be born in the Cape's small homing room off the oversized keeping room. Their second child, a daughter, died at five weeks old. Then came John in 1827, George Loring in 1827, Abba in 1830, Nathaniel Ray in 1831, and Daniel in 1834. Both Nathaniel and Daniel followed in the Weston family's interest in shipbuilding by becoming ship caulkers.

The full Cape Cod, which John Jr. built, had the traditional two windows on either side of the central front door. Unlike the house his father grew up in, however, this Cape's windows did not touch the eaves, which allowed for higher ceilings.

John Jr.'s house also differed from the many Capes found along Surplus Street since it did not maintain a center chimney. An older building added to the rear of the house already boasted a large fireplace for cooking, enabling John Jr. to build his fireplaces on either end of the house—a lovely and more heat efficient feature. The elimination of a center chimney

also allowed John Jr. to build his stairway straight up without the pitch found in most Cape Cods, another 'novelty' for the time period.

The ell is particularly interesting since its materials and structure indicate a much older building than the main part of the house. In this ell there is a large hearth with a full wall of beautiful exposed bricks. Built into the right side of the fireplace is another fascinating feature. "Here inside this hole was a copper basin that was used to wash the laundry," noted the current owner Dr. Allen Lahey. With so many children, Hannah Weston must have stood often in front of this copper basin scrubbing the family's clothes in water warmed by the large hearth.



Copper laundry basin of the John Weston, Jr. House

A wonderful space in the John Weston Jr. house is the keeping room, now a dining room, which boasts twelve doors all with their original large black hinges and latches. "These Christian doors are found on every wall and led to the homing room, buttery, cellar, stairs, two front parlors, storage areas and to the outside.

John Jr. resided only fourteen years in his house on Surplus Street. He, like others in 1835, was lured to East Boston where new and larger shipyards offered bigger pay and better job opportunities. East Boston experienced a sudden rise in population due to shipbuilding, "which in twenty years' time produced the finest sailing ships that the world had ever seen," noted Morison. Unlike Duxbury's bay, which was too shallow for the Clipper ships, East Boston produced many of these large vessels.

John Weston, Jr. received

a substantial price for his Duxbury property, \$1,089, reflecting the condition and size of the house, and the substantial acreage. Another Weston, Gershom Bradford Weston, the son of Ezra Weston II also known as 'King Caesar', purchased John's property. Gershom was John's third cousin. He never resided here on Surplus Street—the purchase was purely for business purposes.

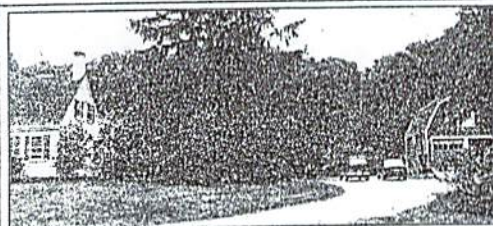
Captain Sylvester, who sailed many of the Weston vessels, later purchased the property, which remained in the Eldridge family until 1875 when it was sold to Seth Weston.

Although Seth was a summer resident, his lineage goes back to the original Duxbury Weston settler, Edmund, the father of John Weston who received the land grant in 1696. Seth Weston was a successful builder and contractor, who often referred to the summer residence as his "resort home."

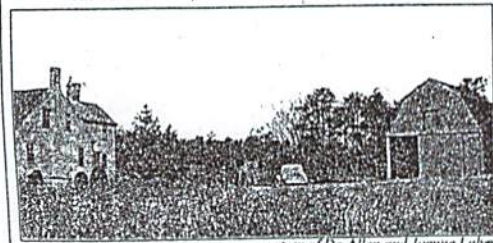
It remained in this family until 1923 when the Weston ownership in the property ended. What is most amazing about this Cape Cod is the fact the house was not winterized until the late 1940s—it remained virtually untouched for almost 125 years. "There were no plumbing, electricity or heat systems in the house until then," noted Dr. Lahey, who purchased the house with his wife, Joanne, in 1976.

An old photo taken in the 1940s shows the privy (outhouse) standing in the distance. Even with the modern updates, the house still maintains many of its original features—so much so, that John Weston, Jr. would recognize the lovely Cape Cod house he built for his family back in 1821.

Next week in this series, our journey ends with a visit to a unique historical house along with old photographs taken by William Facey, once a resident of Surplus Street, whose photographic hobby left a pictorial record of one of Duxbury's oldest pathways.



The John Weston, Jr. House today and in the 1940s.



courtesy of Dr. Allen and Joanne Lahey

A Journey Down Surplus Street PART X

In the End

By DEBORA BABIN KATZ

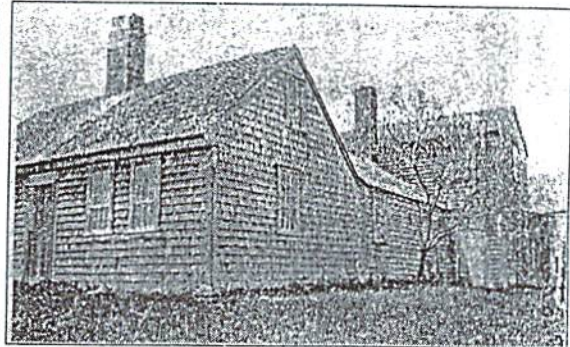
Last week in this series, we visited the Weston houses whose history dates as far back as a land grant in 1696. Now, as we end our journey down



this ancient path, we will visit a unique historical dwelling - The Ebenezer Wormall

House. It is a well-preserved example of early 1700 architecture, and contains the only dining room in town that was once Duxbury's first school-house.

A pathway can be more than just a means to an end. It can lead us to remarkable individuals whose photographs and stories never die, but instead continue to educate us on the importance of ancestral history and preserving our past.



Courtesy of Polly and John Nash

Ebenezer Wormall
232 Surplus Street

It seems fitting to end our journey down Surplus Street with a house once owned and occupied by William and Marion Nash. They were strong proponents of land and building preservation. William, or Bill as everyone in town called him, was the president of the Duxbury Rural and

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Historical Society (DR&HS) from 1963 through 1965. He "sparked the drive" to purchase the King Caesar House, now a museum house of the DR&HS, while Marion would spear head the new gardens of the King Caesar House, bringing in experts on historic gardening, and then planting with the Garden Committee the appropriate plants and flowers. She would spend endless hours caring for the society's gardens. The Garden Committee placed an engraved stepping stone leading to the King Caesar House's gardens in her memory after her death in 1975. A tree was also planted in front of the King Caesar House to recognize Marion Nash. Its plaque has become embedded in the trunk as the tree continues to grow and honor a woman dedicated to plants and preservation.

Soon after purchasing the Ebenezer Wormald house,



This plaque honoring Marion Nash is found in the steps leading to the King Caesar House's gardens.

Photo By Debora Babin Katz

known then as the Nabby Brewster House, Bill Nash set out on a mission to research their old house and large barn. He would not give up until he had turned every page of town records and uncovered any deed related to the property. "He was so excited when he found in the March 14, 1736 Town Record, the transfer of the town's school house building to Ebenezer Wormald. He ran home, climbed through a small opening, no bigger than a shoe box, in the ceiling of the dining room and began taking measurements," recalled Polly



The Ebenezer Wormald House built in 1736. The middle portion was once Duxbury's first schoolhouse.

Photo By Shelly Babin



Bill and Marion Nash on Duxbury Beach.

Courtesy of Polly and John Nash

Nash, his daughter-in-law. Not surprising the old school house's measurements, documented as 18 feet long, 15 feet wide and six feet between the joints, matched exactly to the dining room of the Ebenezer Wormald house.

While in the attic Nash took notes on the materials and construction, commenting on the exposed, rough sawed pine planking and lack of nail holes, which would mean the building had been moved in its entirety and attached to the main house, not dismantled. Nash also observed the rafters as being more than six feet apart and some of them "simply tree trunks, rounded in shape from which bark has been removed." He also found a treasure in the western eaves- a hand-made shuttle used in weaving.

When Bill and Marion Nash purchased the house in 1946, Bill was working as the Business Manager of Milton Academy. He had graduated from Harvard in 1913, served in the Navy during World War I, and then worked in the wool manufacturing business until the Great Depression when he lost his job. "Those who lived through it know what a real financial crisis is. Stores closed, people were paid in IOU's, and the banks shut their doors. Nothing like it has happened since," said Nash at age 90 years old during an interview with reporter Nancy McCafferty for the *Duxbury Clipper*. Marion and Bill were very frugal people, they had survived the Depression, noted Polly Nash who described her mother-in-law making her own soap and using every part of a chicken to stretch the meals it could provide.

One day, Marion and Bill Nash received a call from an old friend and realtor, Percy Walker, about the Ebenezer Wormald House. The couple fell in love with the ten-acre property and began their plans to retire there. "It quickly became their pre-retirement project and a campaign to restore it," noted their son John Nash.

They would add a small bedroom on the first floor. In keeping with the antiquity of the house, Bill Nash purchased with a friend an old barn in Marshfield. "It cost me one dollar, of course, dismantling cost much more," he once remarked. Nash had all the

Seeing Surplus Street through Facey's Lenses

By DEBORA BABIN KATZ

In 1956, a contractor working on the restoration of Charlie and Kye Rogerson's historical house on Surplus Street came across some old stuff and quickly recognized its importance. There, in the eaves of the house, was a box filled with glass plate negatives which former owner William Facey had taken during the turn of the last century. This collection, depicting the town and its people, would prove to be one of Duxbury's

most valuable pictorial records.



Mabel Cushing Facey with one of the Facey babies. Photo taken by William Facey c. 1900.

Courtesy of DR&HS

William Facey came to Duxbury from St. Johns, Newfoundland, in 1884 to work as a telegrapher for the French Atlantic Cable whose office was located on Washington Street, in the former Duxbury Bank built by Ezra Weston II in 1833. The French Atlantic Cable arrived on the shores of Duxbury in 1869, becoming the first line of direct

submarine communications to the United States. "The cable was pulled back from Abrams Hill and sunk in the bed of the river around Cove Street Beach, then extended in a trench up Cove Street to the old Bank Building," noted Franklin K. Hoyt in his extensive research, "the French Atlantic Cable 1869." It operated there until after World War II.

Hoyt is quick to point out how the success of the French Atlantic cable from Brest, France to the shores of Duxbury was largely due to "the knowledge gained and the equipment and techniques perfected during the laying of an earlier transatlantic cable between Ireland and Newfoundland." It is not surprising William Facey, son of Samuel Facey and Elizabeth Vye, came from Newfoundland to work as a telegrapher for the French Atlantic Cable. Perhaps his family had worked for the transatlantic cable there, sparking Facey's interest in the business.

He was twenty years old when he arrived in Duxbury, renting at the Benjamin Bosworth House located at 4 Surplus Street on the corner of Washington Street which ran as a boarding house until it became a summer inn called, *The Cottage by the Sea* in the 1890s.

In 1892, William Facey married Mabel Cushing, the daughter of Fannie A. and Joshua A. Cushing. She grew up not far from Surplus Street, at 313 Washington Street, in the family home where seven generations of Cushings had lived. "Her father, Joshua Cushing, was an auctioneer and real estate agent who owned the building at the corner of Water Street and Washington Street where he ran his business," noted researcher Ann Noyes.

Soon after William and Mabel's marriage, the couple moved to 33 Surplus Street where they raised three children, Edwin Thomas born on September 12 1895, Elizabeth Lyon born April 15, 1901, and their youngest son, Kenneth Bradford Facey born on June 29, 1904.

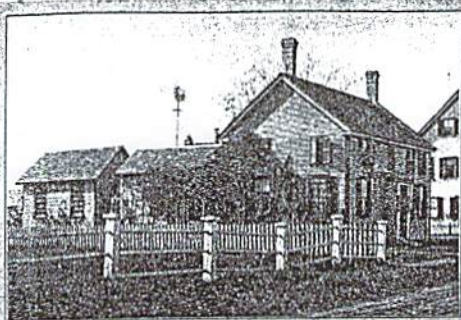
William Facey, known for his story telling and humor, was able to attract people of all ages. "One day my son came home holding a brown paper bag and said, 'Mr. Facey told me to give you these donut holes, Mom.' I opened the bag to find it completely empty to which my son replied laughing, 'There's nothing in it because they were the holes,' recalled Bea Richards, a long time Surplus Street resident.

Mabel Facey also drew the attention of the younger generation from the Surplus and Washington Street area- not through humor but with her baking. "When I was a little girl, I remember my cousin taking me over to Mrs. Facey's, who was always ready to give a kid a cookie," said Noyes.



The Cable House on Washington Street where Facey worked for 45 years.

Photo By Debora Katz



The Facey House at 33 Surplus Street where his glass plate negatives were found. Photo circa 1900.

Courtesy of Kye and Charlie Rogerson

During World War II, the Richards, who lived two houses down from the Facey family on Surplus Street, kept chickens. One hen often flew out of the fenced area and made her way to the Facey's house. William Facey would always return the chicken to their pen. "I'm returning Eleanor," he said to Bea Richards one day. "He had named the hen after Eleanor Roosevelt who was never home at the White House," laughed Richards.

Besides his humorous personality, William Facey will always be remembered as the enthusiastic photographer who left behind a pictorial record of Duxbury, particularly of Surplus Street where he and his family resided for 62 years.

In 1952, he and his wife Mabel moved to Hingham, selling their house on Surplus Street to Charlie and Kye Rogerson. Their son, Kenneth, had died at a young age in 1926. But Edwin and Elizabeth lived long lives; both married and moved from the family house on Surplus Street.

Major restorations took place before the Rogersons moved in to the house in 1956. The wiring, plumbing and heat systems were all updated. The privy (outhouse) was still attached to the rear of the property, although there was one bathroom in rough condition, inside the house prior to the renovations.

During the work, one of the carpenters told me I needed to go see the stuff in the attic, which was accessible only through a small hole in the guestroom, noted Charlie Rogerson. "There in the attic eaves we found a whole box full of glass negatives, which William Facey had taken, mostly of Surplus Street, Washington Street and South Station," recalled Rogerson.

There were 170 glass plates in all, which Charlie and Kye Rogerson donated to the Duxbury Rural & Historical Society (DR&HS). The society's Library and Archives Committee indexed the entire collection, created an album of photographs from each plate, and stored away the glass plate collection for safe keeping. "These photographs have been seen in the DR&HS exhibits, and used in several of their publications. They are without a doubt an invaluable documentation of Duxbury in the late 1800s and early 1900s."

His photographs illustrate both the geography of the town during the time period, as well as the people of this lovely seaside community. "There are no trees, so you can see a long distance in the pictures," noted Charlie Rogerson. They document the land as having open pastures, and reveal how many of the houses, even ones far down on Surplus Street, had once enjoyed views of the bay.

There are pictures of the Facey family, and of ladies wearing long dresses and fancy hats. There are photos of historical houses, the Yacht Club, Partridge Academy, the Cable house where William Facey worked, the railroad station, stagecoach, the old school house, the Myles Standish Monument, Old Town Hall, the Powder Point Bridge, and town parades. Mostly, there are snapshots of people depicting daily life in Duxbury.

William Facey worked a total of 45 years for the French Atlantic Cable, which later became the Anglo-American Telegraph. He worked his way up from telegrapher to manager, spending his last nine years as manager of the Western Union, who leased the transatlantic cables. William Facey died in 1955 at the age of ninety-one. His wife Mabel passed away the following year.

Try as I might to find a photograph of William Facey for this article—pouring through old photographs, files, and making phone calls—I found only the truth about photographers: they are always looking through the camera lens, never at it. The Facey collection though lacking in a self-portrait remains a tribute to the town he loved dearly. Without William Facey's fascination in photography, we would be left simply with oral histories, some written documents, and isolated photographs. Today through Facey's lenses we can travel back in time and see Surplus Street in a whole new light.

Part X: In the End

planks cleaned, reusing them to build the addition.

When Ebenezer Wormald purchased this land from Nathaniel Chandler in 1736, he built a simple and small dwelling, which today is the front section of the house. He was already married to Elizabeth Briggs and had three children, Kezia born in 1718, Betty born in 1720 and Abiah in 1725. "The house is what is known as a 'plank' house constructed of vertically placed rough sawed pine boards; shingles on the outside and plaster within," noted William Nash in 1971.

Ebenezer was a farmer, like most living in Duxbury in the early 1700s. This expansive land must have provided plenty of space for his cattle to graze. The date of the large barn located in the rear of property—larger than the dwelling house—is unknown, but its structure is very old and is recorded in deeds as early as 1796. The privy, or outhouse as we call it today, is located inside the barn with a door facing the rear of



The granite monument marks the location of the first schoolhouse, which was built along Tremont St. and later moved and attached to the Ebenezer Wormald House.

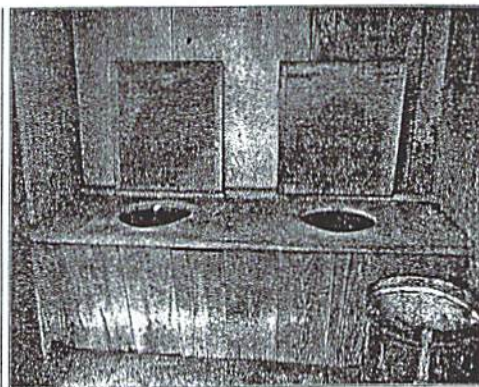
Photo by Debora Babin Katz

the house. It is a "two seater" which was common in houses with many family members. A poem by James Whitcomb Riley hangs in the privy, placed there by Bill Nash as a testament of his humor. (See photos)

"I remember the barn was full of old furniture when my mother and father-in-law lived there in the 1920s," recalled Marianne Hanigan in a recent interview with the *Clipper*. Marianne, now 97 years old, married William Hanigan in 1929. He was the only child of Thearessa and Thomas Hanigan who had purchased the Ebenezer Wormald house, barn and 9 3/4 acres for \$800 in 1919 from James E. Cashman. Thomas Hanigan worked for the Old Colony Railroad as a ticket collector, recalled Marianne Hanigan. "Thearessa and Thomas were lovely people, and so gracious," she added.

Their son William was a bright young man, graduating from Partridge Academy in

continued on next page



The "two-seater" privy of the Ebenezer Wormald House is located in the barn.

Photo By Shelly Babin

Duxbury. He became a teacher in Boston, and met his future wife, Marianne, at a baseball game at Train Field in Duxbury where he was playing one evening.

Marianne often visited the Ebenezer Wormald house with her husband and children, staying over sometimes in the small bedroom on the western side of the original part of the house.

The Hanigan's loved the

property. Thearessa Hanigan was known as a "terrific housekeeper" who always made you wipe your feet before entering the house," noted Marianne Hanigan.

A large brick well located close to the northeast-end of the house, just outside the kitchen window, still functions today and provides water for the lawn. "We use to store the butter in the big well, and would

The Passing of the Backhouse

By James Whitcomb Riley (1849 - 1916)

When memory keeps me company and moves to smiles or tears,
A weather-beaten object looms through the mist of years,
Behind the house and barn it stood, a half a mile or more,
And hurrying feet a path had made, straight to its swinging door.
Its architecture was a type of simple classic art
But in the tragedy of life it played a leading part;
And oft the passing traveler drove slow and heaved a sigh
To see the modest hired girl slip out with glances shy.

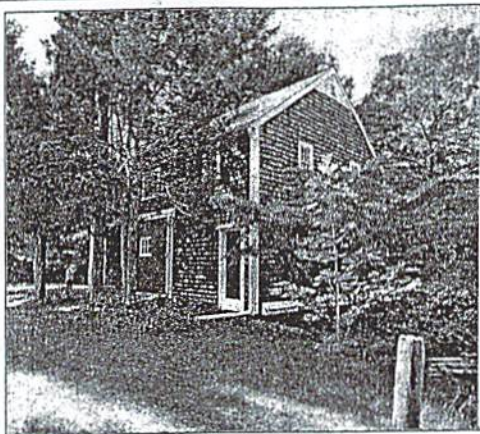
We had our posey garden that the women loved so well,
I loved it too, but better still I loved the stronger smell
That filled the evening breezes so full of homely cheer
And told the night-o'-ertaken tramp that human life was near.
On lazy August afternoons, it made a better bower
Delightful, when grandfather sat and while away an hour,
For there the summer morning its every charm entwined,
And the berry bushes reddened in the teeming soil behind.

All day fat spiders spun their webs to catch the buzzing flies,
That flitted to and from the house where ma was baking pies.
And once a swarm of hornets bold, had built a palace there
And stung my unsuspecting aunt — I must not tell you where.
Then father took a flaming pole — that was a happy day.
He nearly burned the building up, but the hornets left to stay
When summer bloom began to fade and winter carouse
We banked the little building up with a heap of hemlock boughs.

But when the crust was on the snow and the sullen skies were gray,
In winter the building was no place where we could wish to stay.
We did our duties promptly, there one purpose swayed our mind,
We tarried not, nor lingered long on what we left behind,
The torture of the icy seat could make a Spartan sob
For needs must scrape the goose-flesh with a lacerating cob,
That from a frost incrustated nail, was suspended by a string,
My father was a frugal man and wasted not a thing.

When grandpa had to go out back and make his morning call,
We'd bundle up the dear old man with a muffler and a shawl —
I know the hole on which he sat — 'twas padded all around,
And once I dared to sit there — 'twas all too wide I found
My joints were all too little and I jack-knifed there to stay;
They had to come and get me out, or I'd passed away.
Then father said ambition was a thing that boys should shun
And I must use the children's hole 'till childhood days were done.

But still I marvel at the craft that cut those holes so true,
The baby hole and the slender hole that fitted sister Sue,
That dear old country land-mark; I've tramped around a bit,
And in the lap of luxury my lot has been to sit,
But ere I die I'll eat the fruit of trees I robbed of yours,
Then seek the shanty where my name is carved upon the door,
I ween the old familiar smell will soothe my hared soul,
I'm now a man but none the less I'll try the children's hole.



The Ebenezer Wormal Barn, door in view leads to the privy.

Photo By Shelly Babin

In the End

continued from previous page

hoist the pail up and down when we needed the butter," recalled Hanigan. Those who grew up on Surplus Street also remember this well, as they would often stop on their way to school for a drink from Aunt Nabby's well.

Aunt Nabby was Abigail Sampson Brewster. She was the daughter of Isaac and Abigail Sampson, and was born in the house in 1801. The purchase of the house by Isaac Sampson in 1796 was the beginning of a 103-year ownership in the property by the Sampson-Brewster family. Isaac Sampson had purchased the Ebenezer Wormal house for \$46 dollars in 1796 from Lot Hunt, a mariner who had married Mary Samson in 1750. Lot and Mary Hunt had raised six children in the house after purchasing it in 1778 from Consider Thomas, a blacksmith.

During the Revolutionary War, Lot Hunt commanded the schooner *Olive*, owned by Captain Nathaniel Winsor, with Thomas Sampson and William Winsor. The British forty-gun ship, *Chatham*, seized the *Olive* but later released the Duxbury crew, "with the loss of their mainsail, which the enemy retained," noted Justin Winsor.

Prior to Lot Hunt's ownership in the property, a cordwainer (cobbler) named John Prior lived in the house from 1772 to 1778. John Prior

had purchased the property for 2 shillings from George Ussel who worked as a blacksmith. Ussel bought the 8 acres of land with "buildings, fencing and orchards thereon" from Thomas Prince, acting as administrator for Ebenezer Wormal's estate, back in 1748. Ussel with his wife Mary had one daughter, Molly, before they moved into the house. Unfortunately, Molly died of consumption at the age of 18 years, and the following year in 1757 her mother Mary passed away at the age of forty. George remarried within the year to Mercy Osyer who came to live in the Ebenezer Wormal house.

From farmer, to blacksmith, to shoemaker, to mariners, and then to a railroad worker, this house is a wonderful example of all the enterprises which sustained those who lived on Surplus Street.

In the end...

Surplus Street boasts some of the town's most beautifully maintained historical homes, barns, fences and other out-buildings. This is largely due to its residents, both past and present, who, like Marion and Bill Nash, recognize the importance of preservation and cherish this road which once led to the Meetinghouse and salt marshes. In the beginning, it was just a well worn Native American trail, then a dirt cart path, later a graveled road, and today a paved street; but in the end, it is really an historical journey down one of Duxbury's oldest pathways.

NOTE:

I would like to thank all the individuals who assisted in this one-year project. The names of those who provided oral histories, photographs, maps, deeds and genealogy research, along with encouraging words has become too long to print, but you know who you are and how much your help meant to me. Thanks to the organizations that provided photos and data, such as the Library & Archives Committee of the DR&HS, the Town Clerk's office, and the Duxbury and Plymouth Cemetery offices. A special thanks goes to all the Clipper readers who called or wrote me during this series on Surplus Street. Your enthusiasm for history and kind words are what this writer lives on, so please keep in touch!

—Debora Babin Katz

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